

A Profile of **Apprenticeship**



Blue Mountain Community College
February 2020

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Apprenticeship at Blue Mountain Community College

Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) has connected students to apprenticeship programs with employers in Northeastern Oregon for over 30 years. The college provides apprenticeship education, training, and business support services in five largely rural counties and to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Today, BMCC supports some 200 student apprentices earning apprenticeship certificates and degrees by combining On-the-Job Training (in the workplace) and Related Training (related coursework or classroom instruction) in programs developed by their employers. Student apprentices work from day one, largely debt-free. For many, this is what makes college and a well-paying career possible.

About the College

Overview

Total Enrollment: 7,200
Average Student Age: 31
Number of Campuses: 7
Counties Served: Grant, Baker, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa Counties
Accredited by Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Apprenticeship Occupations

- Construction
- Plumbing
- Inside Electrician
- Limited Maintenance Electrician
- Limited Manufacturing Plant Electrician
- Industrial Maintenance
- Programmable Logic Controller
- Mechanic/Millwright

All BMCC apprenticeship programs are registered with Oregon Labor and Industries (OL&I), which has statutory authority over Registered Apprenticeship (RA) in Oregon and supports the Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Council (OSATC).

BMCC's apprenticeship program staff partner with approximately 80 employers, ranging from larger firms like Lamb Weston, Good Shepherd Community Hospital, and Woodgrain Millwork (formerly Boise Cascade), to smaller operations like Pendleton Electric Company, Hendon Electric, and Rob Merriman Plumbing & Heating.

They also recruit and place students, provide related training and testing, and award credentials, typically in combination. All apprentices who complete their programs

Credentials Apprentices Can Earn

3 Associate of Applied Science Degrees

Construction Trades
Electrician Technologies
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology

5 Certificates of Completion

Construction Trades
Electrician Technologies (2)
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology (2)

3 Career Pathways Certificates

Construction Trades
Electrician Technologies
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology

earn apprenticeship journeyworker certificates together with college credit that can be applied toward an Associate of Applied Science degree. They may also earn one of five Certificates of Completion or one of three Career Pathway Certificates. These certificates are recognized statewide and confer additional credit toward an Associate of Applied Science degree at any college in the state that offers the same degree.

Structure of Registered Apprenticeship at Blue Mountain Community College

Blue Mountain Community College serves as an apprenticeship intermediary. The college staffs Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees (JATCs) and Trades Apprenticeship and Training Committees (TATCs, which are typically called Local Committees in Oregon), places apprentices with employers who provide On-the-Job Training (known as training agents), and coordinates college credit, licensing and certificates, and student support.

College staff administer six different Local Committees that oversee apprenticeship programs within BMCC's 300 square-mile service area. They conduct outreach, such as recruiting at job fairs and high schools, and manage administrative responsibilities, including registering and reporting on apprenticeship programs.

Around the 2008 recession, industry in the region faced serious skill and worker shortages even as unemployment soared. Employers found themselves poaching each other's employees to fill open positions. These shortages were largely the result of retirements from businesses that lacked younger employees who could be quickly trained and promoted into open positions. Employers collaborated with the college and other partners in a 'grow your own' talent strategy, and Registered Apprenticeship was a key component.

BMCC had long supported Registered Apprenticeship but faced recessionary budget pressures that limited its capacity to grow new programs. In response, apprenticeship employers partnered with the college to establish a fee-based administrative model: employers would pay a monthly fee to the college for apprenticeship support services, which would cover the cost of the Director of Apprenticeship's position.

Employers became invested in Registered Apprenticeship as a model for training workers and addressing skill gaps. With the help of BMCC, they established new RA programs and Local Committees to support them. This collective investment in skills meant that even when workers did leave specific firms for new opportunities, industry benefited from higher levels of preparedness within the workforce overall. The model has proven sustainable and continues to support apprenticeship program staff today.

Benefits of Registered Apprenticeship

The benefits of Registered Apprenticeship for employers are clear: skilled workers who are professionally trained and academically prepared for precisely the jobs and career paths employers need. The benefits for apprentices are also clear: work-relevant and paid training leading to credentials (and often degrees) and to good jobs and careers—without student debt.

BMCC plays important roles in realizing these benefits. For students, the college facilitates access to federal Pell grants, Oregon Promise grants, and tuition scholarships from private and philanthropic organizations that support degree-seeking students. It also helps students navigate employer reimbursement programs, low-cost or forgivable loans, and other resources available to help cover the cost of tuition for those completing journey-level apprenticeship credentials and additional certificates and degrees.

BMCC has actively promoted apprenticeship to women and people of color in recent years. It supports these and other underrepresented students through its own student support programs, such as [TRiO](#), which provides mentoring and other services. The college has seen some success: more women are joining traditionally male trades, such as plumbing and construction. Increasing and diversifying talent pipelines for critical occupations through RA is a benefit for local and regional industry.

Because the college has expertise in accommodating students with diverse needs and abilities, it can extend this capacity to employers. BMCC is regularly called upon to provide accommodation in training and testing or to connect apprentices to specialized equipment or services. For example, the college recently connected a student apprentice with dyslexia to a learning coach for reading support during training.

Finally, participating in RA benefits BMCC as well. The Director of Apprenticeship works closely with other college departments and programs to recruit a diverse applicant body and engage employer partners. These relationships help the college learn about the application of new technologies, industry trends and emerging skill demands, and changing community needs so that it can offer high-value services to these customers—such as customized training for current workers. This kind of employer engagement can boost enrollment and increase the range and quality of programs and services the college is able to provide.

In sum, RA provides a path to careers for students, a talent pipeline for employers, and helps BMCC generate revenue and advance its stated mission: to provide “responsive and high quality innovative educational programs and services that promote personal and professional growth to strengthen our communities.”

What's Next?

More than a decade ago, the aging of the workforce increased demand for technically skilled workers in Oregon—especially in the rural communities BMCC serves. This helped boost interest in the RA training approach because it is specifically designed to ensure knowledge is passed from one professional generation to the next.

More recently, new challenges have emerged. The wave of retirements that began in the early 2000s has continued at a steady pace, imposing ongoing workforce constraints on the growth of key industries and firms. Although Registered Apprenticeship offers a solution to training new workers, shrinking numbers of experienced workers in the workplace can impede speed and scale. For example, as the number of qualified mentors and trainers decreases, qualified apprentices may not secure placements right away because there are too few journeyworkers in the workplace to maintain the state-required journeyworker-to-apprentice ratios for On-the-Job Training. BMCC's apprenticeship stakeholders are looking for solutions to this challenge.

Integrating technology effectively is another challenging aspect of BMCC's apprenticeship work. For example, all college instructors use Zoom, an online video conferencing platform, to host courses during inclement weather or as an option for distance learners. The result is fewer class cancellations (and therefore less need to make up the course time or work at a later date) and expanded access to learning opportunities for students who live far from campus. These video and other technologies promise new options for student learning and engagement. They also place new demands on mentors and trainers in the workplace to continue to adapt their programs and methods of instruction.

Looking ahead, Blue Mountain Community College is working with Local Committees to engage new employers in existing apprenticeship programs. In addition, the college seeks to work with employers to ensure apprentices maximize opportunities to earn high-value certificates and degrees in addition to their journeyworker credentials, positioning them for durable, well-paying careers.

Connect to Registered Apprenticeship:

For information about Registered Apprenticeship at Blue Mountain Community College:

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bluecc.edu/academics/departments-academic-programs/apprenticeship

For information about business services offered at Blue Mountain Community College:

Office of Instruction

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2411 NW Carden Ave., PO Box 100, Pendleton, OR 97801

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bluecc.edu/about-bmcc/administration/office-of-instruction

To learn more about Registered Apprenticeship in Oregon:

Oregon Labor and Industries

oregon.gov/boli/Pages/contact_us.aspx

Apprenticeship in Oregon

oregonapprenticeship.org/